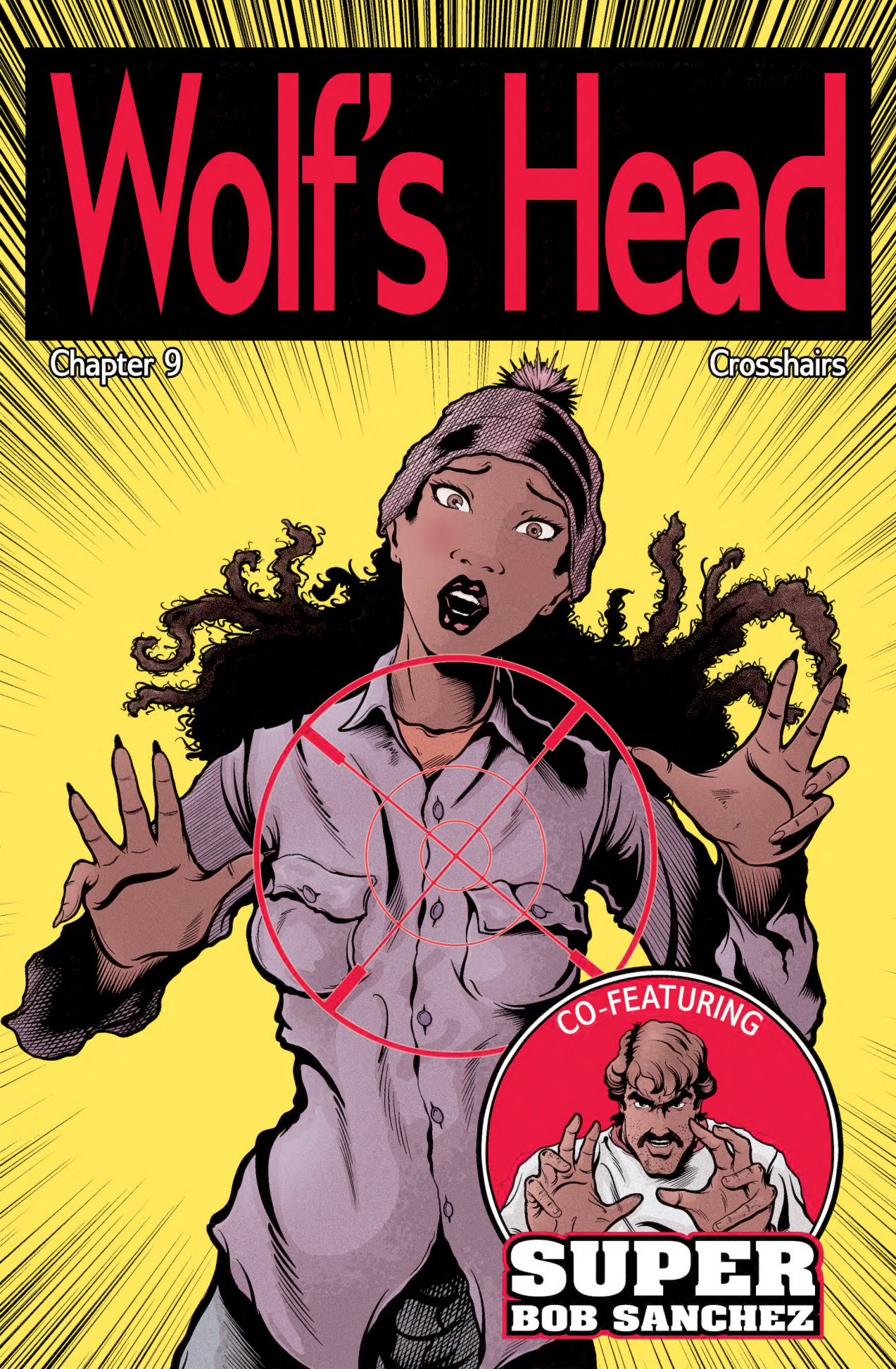
Wolf's Head

Chapter 9

Crosshairs



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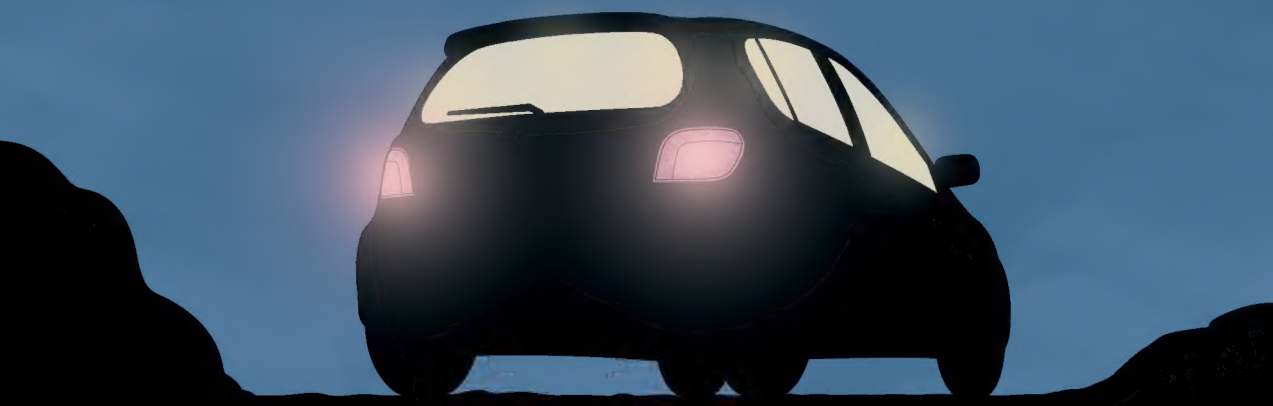

By Von Allan

Edited by Sam Boswell

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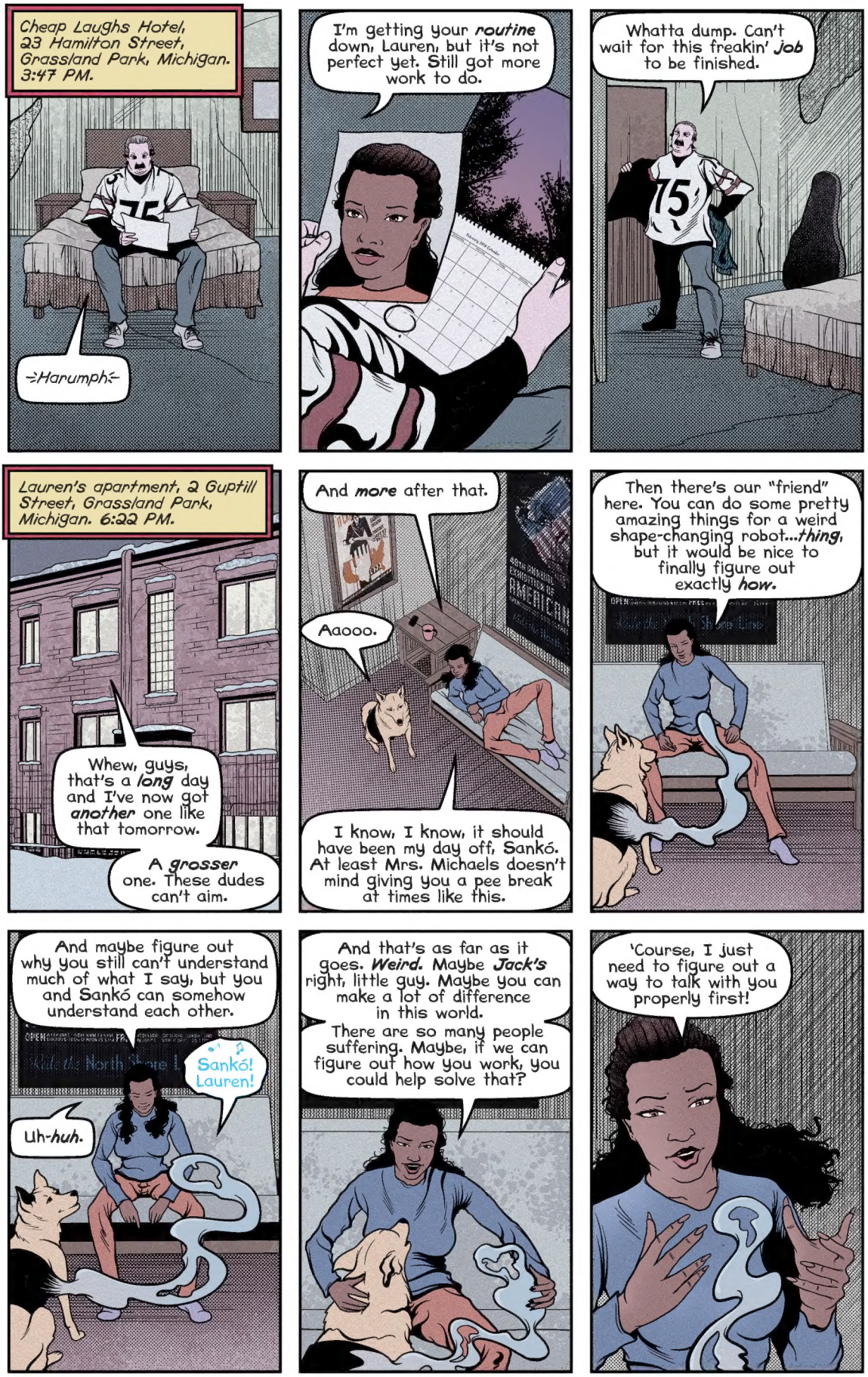
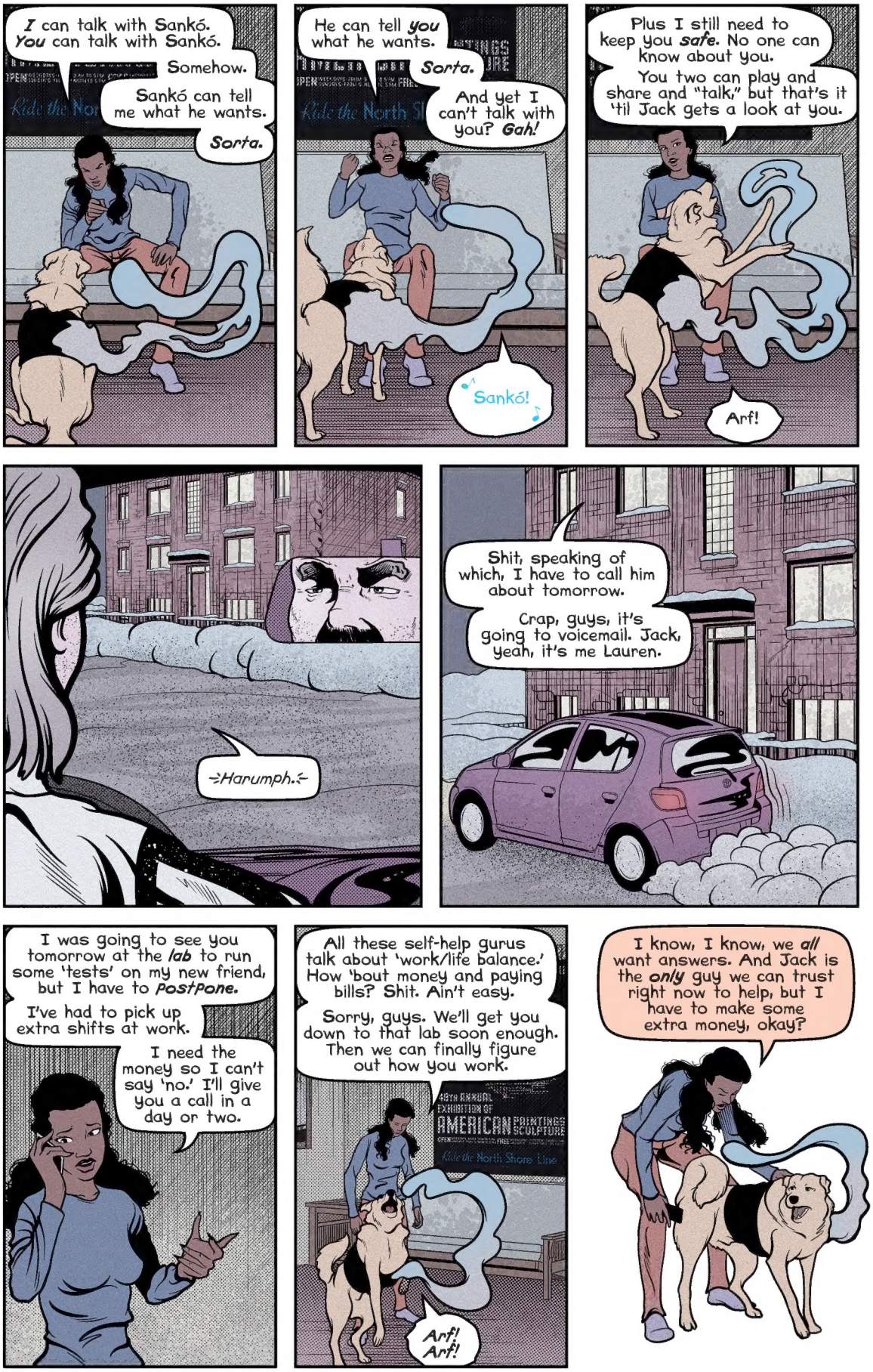
Raymond Stevens Office Tower, the outskirts of Detroit, Michigan. Wednesday, February 21st, 2018. 1:12 PM.
Are there any extra shifts, Jimmy? I had to take an expensive cab ride the other day and it just about broke me.
Where the hell did you go, Lauren?
The vet. Yeah, it involved my dog. Shit happens, but he's fine. Anyway, I'm late with bills and I need to pick up some cash quick.
Actually, yer in luck.
Andy tweaked his back again so he can't come in tomorrow. I know you have it off, but if you don't mind scrubbing down the men's urinals, you can take his shift.
Hell, you can take his shifts for the foreseeable future!
That sounds great!
58
DRAGON

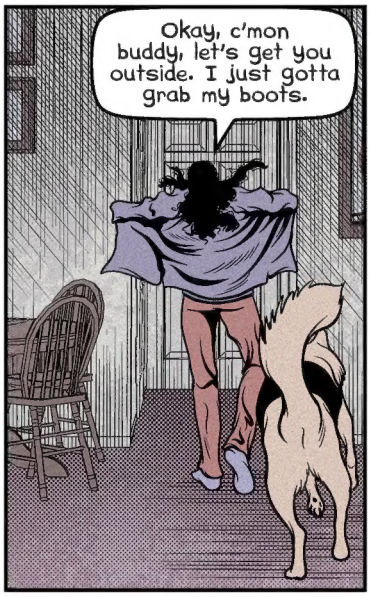

Cheap Laughs Hotel, 23 Hamilton Street, Grassland Park, Michigan. 3:47 PM.
=Harumph=
I'm getting your routine down, Lauren, but it's not perfect yet. Still got more work to do.
Whatta dump. Can't wait for this freakin' job to be finished.
75
Lauren's apartment, 2 Guptill Street, Grassland Park, Michigan. 6:22 PM.
Whew, guys, that's a long day and I've now got another one like that tomorrow.
A grosser one. These dudes can't aim.
And more after that.
Aaooo.
I know, I know, it should have been my day off, Sankó. At least Mrs. Michaels doesn't mind giving you a pee break at times like this.
Then there's our "friend" here. You can do some pretty amazing things for a weird shape-changing robot...thing, but it would be nice to finally figure out exactly how.
And maybe figure out why you still can't understand much of what I say, but you and Sankó can somehow understand each other.
Sankó! Lauren!
Uh-huh.
And that's as far as it goes. Weird. Maybe Jack's right, little guy. Maybe you can make a lot of difference in this world.
There are so many people suffering. Maybe, if we can figure out how you work, you could help solve that?
'Course, I just need to figure out a way to talk with you properly first!


I can talk with Sankó. You can talk with Sankó.
Somehow.
Sankó can tell me what he wants.
Sorta.
He can tell you what he wants.
Sorta.
And yet I can't talk with you? Gah!
Sankó!
Plus I still need to keep you safe. No one can know about you.
You two can play and share and "talk," but that's it 'til Jack gets a look at you.
Arf!
-Harumph.-
Shit, speaking of which, I have to call him about tomorrow.
Crap, guys, it's going to voicemail. Jack, yeah, it's me Lauren.
I was going to see you tomorrow at the lab to run some 'tests' on my new friend, but I have to postpone.
I've had to pick up extra shifts at work.
I need the money so I can't say 'no.' I'll give you a call in a day or two.
All these self-help gurus talk about 'work/life balance.' How 'bout money and paying bills? Shit. Ain't easy.
Sorry, guys. We'll get you down to that lab soon enough. Then we can finally figure out how you work.
48TH ANNUAL EXHIBITION OF AMERICAN PAINTINGS SCULPTURE
Ride the North Shore Line
Arf! Arf!
I know, I know, we all want answers. And Jack is the only guy we can trust right now to help, but I have to make some extra money, okay?

Lauren!
Aw, I think you kinda understand. Maybe, right? Well, I'll *pretend* you do.
LAFAYETTE THEATRE
1922
Sankó!
Grrrrrrrr!
Grrrrrrrrrrrr!
Rowf! Arf!

Okay, I gotta get to bed.
Sankó, how about one more pee before we call it quits for the night?
'Course, your friend is gonna have to *hide*.

Arf! Arf!
Yeah?


Okay, c'mon buddy, let's get you outside. I just gotta grab my boots.

A derelict street in South Line, Michigan, near Metro Detroit. 11:43 PM.
That light post will do nicely.
Let's see if this stupid EMP thing works like he said it would.*
* See last issue - V.
ZzzzaPPP!
Son of a bitch!
That should fix the little friend she has. Then with it out of the way, I can fix her, too.
Not a bad way to earn the hundred and fifty G's he's paid me.
7:03 AM.
Guys, I gotta head to work.
You're still hiding when Mrs. Michaels comes by to walk Sankó, right?
Oh, I hope so.
I've put enough people in danger with all this crap, I don't need to add anyone else to the list.
You're being sneaky, right? Right? Can't tell me? Won't tell me? Gah!
Fine! Here goes nothing. I'll catch the bus and pray that you both behave like angels.
7:46 AM.
8:21 AM.
8:52 AM.
Yeah, that's her, alright. No doubt about it.
I've almost got her schedule down.

Wednesday, February 28th.
9:22 PM.
CHEAP LAUGHS HOTEL
THRIFT STORE
GAMBLING
Always =hmph= a bit of a pain to get it =hrmph= off.
There we go!
Time to get my game face on.
Heh.
Losing the waddle--
JACKSON
--will take some adjusting to.
Like a newborn baby. I gotta be around hundred pounds lighter.
And the teeth feel great, though. I was getting too used to those old fakes.
I'm actually gonna miss the ol' soup strainer, though. Huh.
Just gotta wipe down the room and then it's show time. Finally.

10:18 PM.
Hey Sankó, hey Machine.
Sankó, I know Mrs. Michaels had you out about two hours ago, so you can wait for a bit. I'm beat.
More than beat. Beaten down beat.
God, this is why uppers were invented. Jesus.
=Harumph=
One more day and then I have a day off.
Finally.
Gonna sleep. Gonna sleep some more.
Then groceries.
Then guess what?
I could pick this lock with my eyes closed.
Bingo.

More. Fucking. Sleep.
Guys, is it weird--
yawn
--to fantasize about sleep?
Yeah, well, who cares?
I've been doing exactly that--
yawn
--while I'm scrubbing floors.
Jus' gonna close my eyes for...
Zzzzzzzzzz
Rrrrrr...
He wasn't kidding! What the fuck are you?
Rowrf! Arf!
Sankō!
Doesn't matter. Got something for you--
--Eat this!

Sankó...
Oh my god.
No. No, no, no!

Aaieeeee!
Saaaaankó!
Lauren...
You son of a bitch.
You son of a bitch!

No!
No?
Lauren!
Arrgh!
Lauren!
=Cough, cough=
Lauren...
Aaaooo.
Aw, Jesus.
"Son of a =cough= bitch didn't =cough= p-prep me right."

Not the right intel. Nothin'.
Needed ⇒cough⇐ more. A helluva lot more.
Stupid EMP gun didn't even work right.
S-super machine? ⇒Cough⇐ Guarding her?
What the f-fuck ⇒cough⇐ is it?
Aw, shit. Oh, buddy.
Aooo.
Sankó, you scared me, but I think you're okay.
I think the charge from that- that weapon packed a punch, huh?
Hit you hard.
L-Lauren...
But this guy...
I don't even know how to fix--
--I-I gotta think.
My whole plan was to keep everyone safe. Try to lay low. But that's not working.
I was trying to buy time to figure you out. Be able to talk with you. Work with you.
But we were targeted. Shit. We can't stay here.
EEEEEE
Sirens. Crap. I can't explain all this.
We gotta run. All three of us. I'll get my backpack f-for you.
But I know who sent him. Oh, I know it.
10:33 PM.
Some-time, some-when, they're gonna pay.

1108 Greystone Road, Southview, Michigan, near Metro Detroit. March 1st. 7:23 AM.
Jack? I'm really sorry about this, but I need your help.
We need your help.
58
Can we come in?
The End.

A 'local road' not far from Stony Ridge, Ohio. Thursday, March 1st, 2018. 2:22 AM.
"Old Bess" with SUPER BOB SANCHEZ
Why, Bess, why?! Why the hell would you break down here, girl o' mine? Detroit's jus' an hour away!
KILLERBEARDS
MOTORCYCLE CLUB
It's right over there! Zip down the I-280. Rumble over the I-75. Then bam! Detroit! So close! Jayzus!
You know I haven't had any luck finding many short-haul contracts in Michigan. Fuck knows I tried.
Then I tried to 'broaden our vistas' here in Ohio. No better luck. But we do have a standing contract in Detroit that we need to fill. That 'package' needs to get back to Canada.
So I'm tellin' ya, baby, you gotta fucking work!

Huh. I probably should get off the road.
Your goddamn truck shouldn't be on this goddamn road! This is a 'local' damn road. Your truck *isn't* allowed here, dumbass! *Move it!*
Uh-huh. Can't do it, friend. She's broken right down.
No way you limped that truck here, 'friend.' You were trying to get around the Ohio Turnpike *tolls*, weren't you? 'Run the parallel' and all that?
Yeah! Don't mind fessin' up, either!
Those tolls are a pain in the ass. They don't care about weight. They *only* care about how many axles you got.
Ol' Bess here is *empty*. No way in hell am I payin' for an empty truck.
Don't you worry; once I get her up and runnin' again, we're outta of this shit hole of yours.
Shit hole?! Shit hole? I love this county! Goddamn assholes like you're ruining it. Doing an end-run around the tolls. Cheap ass!
Get outta here! Go on, *fuck off!*
Yeah? You think? My sister is a *sheriff's deputy* in this county, 'friend.' And she's on duty *right now*.
I'm *calling* her. She's gonna come in a hurry.
We'll see how your attitude is then! Hope everything is in order with your goddamn truck!
Shit.

Shit!
The sheriff's station isn't that far away!
SHIT!
Bess, girl, I don't even know what's wrong with you. All I got was a 'rackety' sound.
Then a whine. Then a sad sick little sigh.
And then...nothing. No power. No juice. And we jus' rolled to a stop, as nice as can be.
Huh. Nothin', eh? Fine. I'll take another pass.
Fuck!
Nope!
Nothing!
Nada!
Gah!
Nope.
Fuck.
Nope!
Not workin'.
FUCK!
Listen, Bess...

Listen, Bess. You listen to me now. That deputy is comin'.
An' when she gets here, she's callin' for a *tow*.
You know it and I know it. Who knows what'll happen then?
Some yard inspector might just take a close look at my trailer. A *real* close look.
They might jus' find my *smuggling* hole. I'd like to avoid all that, okay?
The rest of that fee for the Detroit job is comin' soon, girl. And I *promise* I'm gonna put that right back into you.
That'll get ya some shiny new parts. Fix you right up.
You just have to *behave* 'til then, right? Behave yourself and *work*.
And you gotta work *now*. Okay? We on the same page? That deputy'll be here soon.
You... gotta...work... *NOW!*

Yeah, Baby! Right on, Bessy! Yeah!
♫ "Oh, the minstrel boy to the war is gone; In the ranks of death ye may find him;" ♫
VRRrrrrrooOOOOOm!
Five minutes later...
♫ "His father's sword he hath girded on, With his wild harp slung along behind him;" ♫
"Land of Song, the lays of the warrior bard, May some day sound for thee, But his harp belongs to the brave and free..."
SHERIFF
INTERSTATE 75 MICHIGAN
♫ "...And ♫ shall never sound in slavery!"
Hahahaha!
SHERIFF
Brrrr-ring!
Super Bob? Frank. Bad news. The job has gone sideways. Completely.
The 'package' won't need a return trip after all.
Oookay.
Look, I know, alright? I'm screwed with this, too.
What I'm gonna do is give you the kill fee anyway.
As always, you'll be treated right.
Come see me tomorrow morning and we'll get that sorted out. See you then.
KILLERBEARDZ
FUCK!
The End.

Next!

Lauren and Super Bob meet for the first time! But will they meet as friends...or enemies? And what about the AI? How badly hurt was it? Where does that leave Sankō? And what are Frank's murderous plans for Lauren? Where do things stand now? All this and more will be dealt with in a tale titled...

FRIENDS AND FOES!

He seemed surprised when the EMP thing didn't do the trick.
It mustered up enough courage and stopped him. Hurt him. He took off. But he knew exactly where I lived, knew about the AI, he knew everything!
FRUSTRATION!

VON ALLAN

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And smuggling?
If there's enough money in it.
I might want to hire you to smuggle something. If I can scrounge up enough money.
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Dramatic ACTION!
STRAIGHT TO THE POINT
DESPERATE TO PROTECT A VULNERABLE YOUNG AI, LAUREN GREENE FLEES AN OLD ENEMY THROUGH DETROIT'S SHADOWS WITH ONLY HER DOG SANKO FOR SUPPORT.
JUST AS A MYSTERIOUS ALLY, SUPER BOB SANCHEZ, OFFERS HOPE FOR ESCAPE, HER BEST FRIEND IS TAKEN HOSTAGE IN A BRUTAL LIFE-OR-DEATH EXCHANGE, LEAVING LAUREN TO CHOOSE BETWEEN SACRIFICE AND SURVIVAL AS TIME RUNS OUT!
Wolf's Head
By Von Allan
Issue 10
CO-STARRING!
SUPER BOB SANCHEZ
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Wolf's Head

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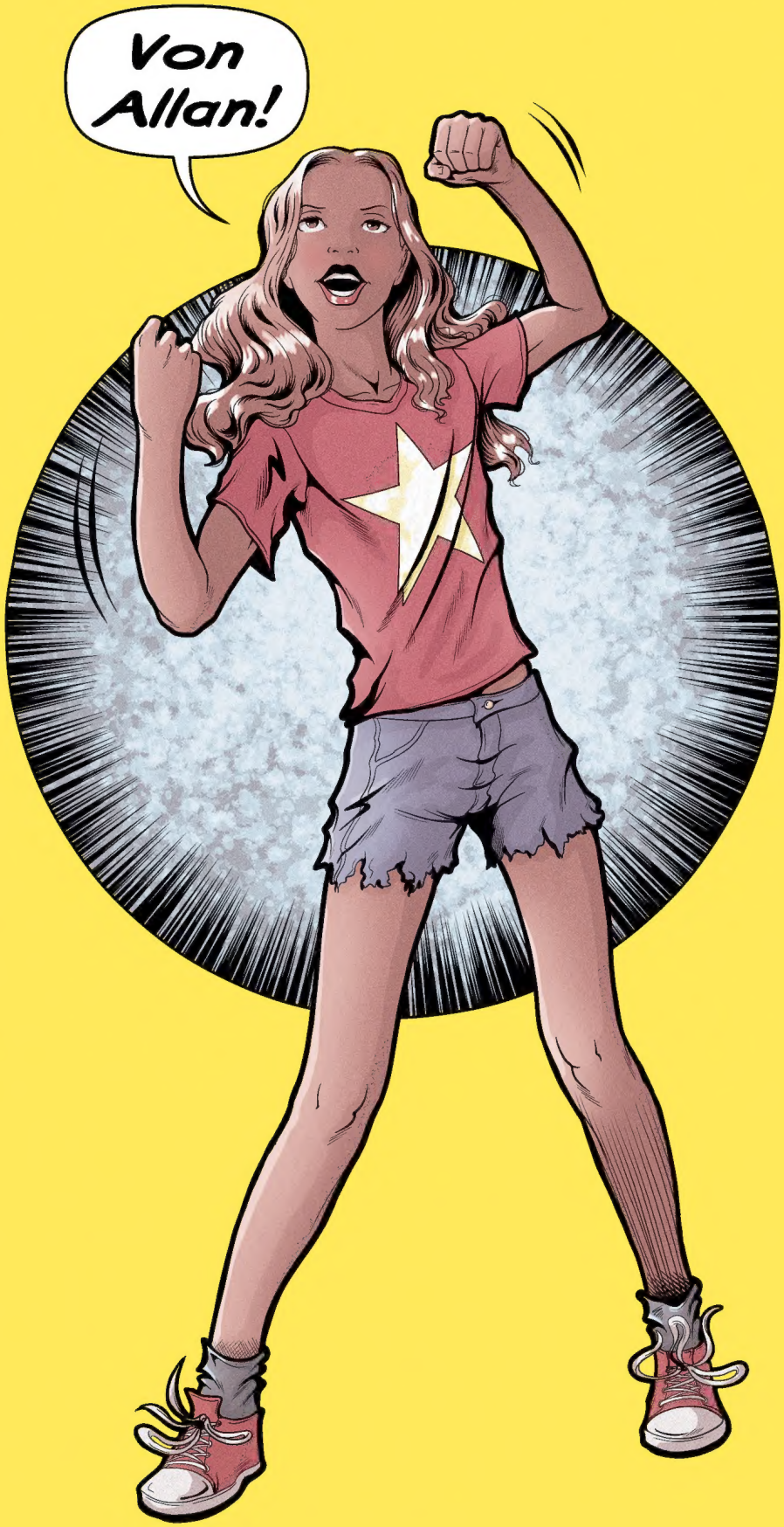
The two posters in Lauren's apartment ("49th annual exhibition of American paintings sculpture Ride the North Shore Line" by Mildred Waltrip and the Detroit Federal Theatre Project's poster of Sinclair Lewis' "It Can't Happen Here") were created by the Works Progress Administration and are part of the Work Projects Administration Poster Collection (Library of Congress). These works are in the public domain in the United States because they are work prepared by an officer or employee of the United States Government as part of that person's official duties under the terms of Title 17, Chapter 1, Section 101 and 105 of the US Code.

Further information regarding the "49th annual exhibition of American paintings sculpture Ride the North Shore Line" by Mildred Waltrip can be found at http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/98513526/

Further information regarding the Detroit Federal Theatre Project's poster of Sinclair Lewis' "It Can't Happen Here" can be found at http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/98513193/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